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Fort Trumbull State Park in New London Opens

The state Department of Public Works (DPW) and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) joined Governor John G. Rowland and other local, state and federal officials to celebrate the ribbon-cutting for the Fort Trumbull State Park Visitors Center in New London on June 14, 2002, Flag Day.

The event also included the official transfer of the deed for the Fort Trumbull property from the National Park Service to the State of Connecticut.

Public Works initiated the three-year \$19.8 million restoration project after the Navy relocated its Undersea Warfare Center from the site. While Fort Trumbull is the newest state park in the 94-park system, it also one of the richest in historical significance, the original fort having been built on the site in 1775. The current fort, which is fully restored, dates from 1839.

Governor Rowland, addressing a crowd of several hundred, said, "Relish this event. This special place we have created is not the just the best park in the state, it is the best in the country."

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Commissioner Anson stated, “The success of this project at Fort Trumbull is due to many. All of us connected in some way with creating this new state park feel a special pride. Let’s keep up the good work.” In particular, he cited the work of DPW Chief Deputy Commissioner P.J. Delahunty, Jr, his assistant Marge Heap, and DPW Project Manager Bob McNulty, for keeping the project on schedule and on budget.

The construction manager for the restoration was Frank E. Downes of New Britain, and the architect was McGinley Hart of Boston. There were multiple contractors involved in the project.

After the Fort Trumbull property became available from the Navy, the state leased it from the National Park Service through the Federal Lands to Parks Program. Upon the completion of the redevelopment for use as a state park, as stipulated in the lease agreement, the state took possession of the property from the National Park Service.

In addition to Governor Rowland and Commissioner Anson, other officials participating in the ceremony included Commissioner Arthur J. Rocque, Jr., Department of Environmental Protection; U.S. Rep. Rob Simmons, 2nd District; Randy W. Turner, the U.S. National Park Service; Mayor Lloyd H. Beachy, City of New London; and Diane McMasters, president of the Friends of Connecticut State Parks. The master of ceremonies was Deputy Commissioner David K. Leff, DEP.

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The 16-acre park and Fort, which sits on a point overlooking the Thames River and Long Island Sound, offers something for everyone, from fishing piers, picnic areas, and waterfront walkways, to a museum, visitors center, conference center and historical exhibits.

Also included in the project was the demolition of some 18 modern-day structures, to return the fort to its 1800's appearance.

The park highlights the site's long military history -- dating from the original edifice in which a Revolutionary War battle was fought, its use as a training ground during the Civil War, its hosting of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy until the 1930's, as a Naval base during the World Wars, and as a top secret sound lab during the Cold War.

The state Department of Public Works is responsible for the design and construction of major capital building projects (except highways and bridges) for most state agencies, leasing and acquisitions statewide, and facility management, maintenance and security of state buildings in the greater Hartford area.

